

and maintain the systems of our weaponry in the future as they can in the past 3 years.

Second, it is not the general or the ambassador who should come here to speak about Iraq's security, but rather our intelligence agencies that must address the question about whether the Iraq strategy has improved our overall efforts in the global war on terror, with Afghanistan once again prey to terrorists, and the Taliban having gone back into the ungoverned regions to protect them, and General Hayden, head of the CIA, having said that al Qaeda now has a safe haven in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. What is the impact of a strategy in that unstable region that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has described as "in Iraq what we do what we must, but in Afghanistan, we do what we can."

Officials from the State Department likewise must address the impact upon our allies of this war in Iraq and our relationships with them and the efforts to achieve other diplomatic goals, remembering that when we went into Bosnia, 50 percent of the coalition troops were non-U.S., and when we went into Iraq 5 years ago, less than 7 percent of the troops that entered that country were non-U.S.

And then the Treasury, how can they explain the impact of what all economists agree are now almost \$2 trillion to \$3 trillion as the cost of this war in Iraq? When Iraq is awash in oil revenues, why are we using taxpayers' dollars?

Therefore, the questions that General Petraeus can and should not answer comes down to, he should not be the one to tell us how long and at what cost before we change our strategy. It is only if Congress changes the forum for this general to come before us to say and hold up a national mirror, this is the impact of Iraq upon our overall national security strategy, and if it is not working and if it is negatively impacting it, we must therefore change the strategy.

I believe it is against the spirit, as a man who has served in the military 31 years until I entered Congress, to have a military man placed in the position to determine singularly, when he is only responsible for the security of Iraq, to then determine without everyone else there the right strategy and course for America's national security.

We must have that debate. Is the strategy working? Is it harming our overall national security? If it is, change the strategy.

PRESIDENT BUSH INSULTS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WITH HIS SELECTIVE PARDONS AND COMMUTATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, on March 25, President Bush pardoned 15

people and granted one commutation to crimes that ranged from falsifying records, conspiracy, bank embezzlement, dealing in firearms, distributing marijuana, conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud, heroin importation, selling migratory bird parts in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, aiding and abetting the escape of a prisoner, distributing more than 50 grams of crack cocaine, and a variety of other crimes.

This brings to about 157 the number of pardons and/or commutations that President Bush has distributed in his administration in his term in office. And although that number is fewer than other presidents, it in fact is reflective of something that I consider to be a serious problem, and that is this, that although the President has been compassionate or for whatever reason chosen to commute or pardon 157 people up to this point in time, he leaves two Border Patrol agents in jail today because I believe of the misbehavior of the U.S. Attorney in that particular district. And this is unconscionable.

This House actually voted last session unanimously to in fact deny funding to the Department of Justice to continue to hold Border Patrol agents Ramos and Compean in the Federal prison where they have been incarcerated now for well over a year. And their terms are for 11 and 12 years. This is because they have been sentenced because of the testimony of a known drug smuggler by the name of Osvaldo Aldrete-Davila, who was given immunity from prosecution by U.S. Attorney Sutton.

The SUV that Aldrete was driving was found to contain 743 pounds of marijuana. The jury in the Ramos-Compean trial was never told of Aldrete's criminal background. They were led to believe that Aldrete was a one-time smuggler trying to make money to help a sick relative. In fact, he was a professional drug smuggler, and his history was known to the DEA and to Johnny Sutton, who was the prosecuting attorney, at the time of the trial, but this history was kept from the jury.

It has been revealed in documents since the trial that U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton deliberately delayed the arrest of Aldrete for a subsequent drug smuggling incident that occurred while Aldrete was under the grant of immunity but before the trial date. All of this information, of course, was withheld because it would have revealed Aldrete as a professional smuggler, not an innocent victim of the Border Patrol agents. This is a flagrant abuse of prosecutorial discretion.

These mistakes were compounded by asking for a mandatory 10-year sentence for Ramos and Compean for the use of a firearm in the commission of a "crime." The law was never intended to apply to law officers who use their weapons in the performance of their jobs.

The key question at the trial was whether the drug smuggler Aldrete had

a weapon and had pointed it at one of the Border Patrol agents. Mr. Aldrete denied having such a weapon. It was his word against the testimony of the Border Patrol agents, so the credibility of each witness was critical to the jury's evaluation of the incident, yet the jury was kept in the dark about Aldrete's other arrests and his history as a drug smuggler.

The mistakes made by Ramos and Compean in trying to apprehend Mr. Aldrete should have been handled as a violation of agency rules, the failure to write and file a report of an incident involving Aldrete, and punished by a 5-day suspension, not by criminal prosecution. For that reason alone, this conduct rises to the level of reprehensible, the conduct I believe of the U.S. Attorney in this case and of the President of the United States.

To compound the injustice in this case, it is widely known that the U.S. Attorney is a friend of the President, going back to his days as Governor. But Bush's refusal to issue a pardon or a commutation amounts to a coverup I believe of this misconduct in this trial.

Ramos and Compean have appealed their conviction to the U.S. Circuit Court and a decision on that appeal is due shortly. At the very least they deserve a new trial. President Bush has it within his power to end this injustice now by issuing a pardon or a commutation. I sincerely hope that he takes that responsibility seriously and offers this to Mr. Ramos and Mr. Compean, who are languishing in prison for literally no good reason.

COMMEMORATING THE LEGACY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., BY SERVICE FOR PEACE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. YARMUTH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the 40th anniversary of the week Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed to commemorate his legacy as continued by Service for Peace.

During his short life, Dr. King marched in my hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, on his way to touching millions of American lives throughout this Nation and inspiring the masses with his message of freedom and of peace. Today, I am proud to say that, in no small part thanks to the efforts of Reverend Peter Hayes, our local Service for Peace, and programs like 40 Days of Peace, the MLK Season of Service, and the King Memorial Walk and Peace Fest, the spirit of Dr. King is alive and well in our hometown.

Each year, Service for Peace reminds us that though King was taken from us far too early, the gifts he gave to us, his lessons, his passion, his legacy, remain and continue to inspire within us a deep sense of justice.

Nationwide, half a million volunteers took part in this year's MLK Day of

Peace, contributed to their communities and committed themselves to peace and justice.

□ 1630

This Saturday for the second year in a row I will join with members of the Louisville community for the King Memorial Walk and Peace Fest. We will gather at the Muhammad Ali Center to share stories of yesterday's struggles and a vision for tomorrow's successes, before walking as one to the north side of the Ohio River. Crossing that boundary once was a journey between slavery and salvation, Jim Crow and justice, oppression and opportunity for far too many Americans. But this weekend, when we return to Louisville, we will enter a community proud of its diversity, alive with the spirit of peace, and working toward a more just future for all.

While it is true that we cannot bring Martin Luther King, Jr., back, by promoting his teachings, Service for Peace ensures that we will never really lose him, either. The activism of Service for Peace is so much more than a tribute to a great American hero; it is a practical and proven strategy to reduce drug use, crime, violence, and murder in my community and others throughout our great Nation.

I know my colleagues will join me in honoring Service for Peace, just as Service for Peace honors the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WIN-WIN FOR U.S. AND COLOMBIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, and I urge the Speaker of the House to bring this important measure before the House for an up-or-down vote, and submit for the RECORD two articles, one a column recently published in the New York Times by Edward Schumacher-Matos, a former foreign correspondent for the Times and a visiting professor of Latin American studies at Harvard, as well as an editorial in this week's Washington Post in support of the trade agreement.

KILLING A TRADE PACT

(By Edward Schumacher-Matos)

President Bush has been urging Congress to approve a pending trade agreement with Colombia, an ally that recently almost went to war with Venezuela and Hugo Chávez. Even though the agreement includes the labor and environmental conditions that Congress wanted, many Democrats, includ-

ing Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, now say that Colombia must first punish whomever has been assassinating the members of the nation's trade unions before the agreement can pass.

An examination of the Democrats' claims, however, finds that their faith in the assertions of human-rights groups is more righteous than right. Union members have been assassinated, but the reported number is highly exaggerated. Even one murder for union organizing is atrocious, but isolated killings do not justify holding up the trade agreement.

All sides agree that trade-union murders in Colombia, like all violence, have declined drastically in recent years. The Colombian unions' own research center says killings dropped to 39 last year from a high of 275 in 1996.

Yet in a report being released next week, the research center says the killings remain "systematic" and should be treated by the courts as "genocide" designed to "exterminate" unionism in Colombia. Most human-rights groups cite the union numbers and conclude, as Human Rights Watch did this year, that "Colombia has the highest rate of violence against trade unionists in the world."

Even if that is true, it was far safer to be in a union than to be an ordinary citizen in Colombia last year. The unions report that they have 1 million members. Thirty-nine killings in 2007 is a murder rate of 4 unionists per 100,000. There were 15,400 homicides in Colombia last year, not counting combat deaths, according to the national police. That is a murder rate of 34 citizens per 100,000.

Many in Congress, moreover, assume that "assassinations" means murders that are carried out for union activity. But the union research center says that in 79 percent of the cases going back to 1986, it has no suspect or motive. The government doesn't either.

When the Inter American Press Association several years ago investigated its list of murdered Colombian journalists, it found that more than 40 percent were killed for nonjournalistic reasons. The unions have never done a similar investigation.

There are, however, a growing number of convictions for union murders in Colombia. There were exactly zero convictions for them in the 1990s, Colombia's bloodiest decade, when right-wing paramilitaries and leftist guerrillas were at the height of their strength. Each assassinated the suspected supporters of the others across society, including in unions.

With help from the United States, in 2000 the Colombian military and the judicial system began to reassert themselves. Prosecuting cases referred by the unions themselves, the attorney general's office won its first conviction for the murder of a trade unionist in 2001. Last year, the office won nearly 40.

Of the 87 convictions won in union cases since 2001, almost all for murder, the ruling judges found that union activity was the motive in only 17. Even if you add the 16 cases in which motive was not established, the number doesn't reach half of the cases. The judges found that 15 of the murders were related to common crime, 10 to crimes of passion and 13 to membership in a guerrilla organization.

The unions don't dispute the numbers. Instead, they say the prosecutors and the courts are wasting time and being anti-union by seeking to establish motive—a novel position in legal jurisprudence.

The two main guerrilla groups have an avowed strategy of infiltrating unions, which attracts violence. About a third of the identified murderers of union members are leftist

guerrillas. Most of the rest are members of paramilitary groups—presumed to be behind two of the four trade unionist murders this month. The demobilization of most paramilitary groups, along with the prosecutions and government protection of union leaders, has contributed to the great drop in union murders.

President Álvaro Uribe, who has thin skin, can be unwisely provocative when responding to complaints from unions and human rights groups. Still, the level of unionization in Colombia is roughly equal to that in the United States and slightly below the level in the rest of Latin America. The government registered more than 120 new unions in 2006, the last year for which numbers are available. The International Labor Organization says union legal rights in Colombia meet its highest standards. Union leaders have been cabinet members, a governor and the mayor of Bogotá.

Delaying the approval of the trade agreement would be convenient for Democrats in Washington. American labor unions and human-rights groups have made common cause to oppose it this election year. The unions oppose the trade agreement for traditional protectionist reasons. Less understandable are the rights groups.

Human Rights Watch says that it has no position on trade but that it is using the withholding of approval to gain political leverage over the Colombian government. Conversely, they are harming Colombian workers in the process. The trade agreement would stimulate economic growth and help all Colombians.

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 31, 2008]

FREE COLOMBIA—A TRADE PACT EVERYONE CAN LOVE

Sometime after Congress returns from Easter recess this week, President Bush is likely to present the Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement for the approval of the House and Senate. As we have said, the proposed pact is good policy for both Colombia and the United States. Colombia has long enjoyed periodically renewable tariff-free access to the U.S. market; the agreement would make that permanent. In exchange, U.S. producers would, for the first time, get the same tariff-free deal when they export to Colombia. Meanwhile, the agreement contains labor and environmental protections much like those that Congress has already approved in a U.S.-Peru trade pact. A vote for the Colombia deal would show Latin America that a staunch U.S. ally will be rewarded for improving its human rights record and resisting the anti-American populism of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez.

Sending the agreement to the House of Representatives without the prior approval of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) would be risky for the president; usually, the executive and legislative branches tee up such votes cooperatively. But months of Democratic resistance to the Colombia deal may have left Mr. Bush no choice. The agreement is being held hostage by members of the House (and Senate) who argue that Colombia—despite a dramatic drop in its overall murder toll under the leadership of President Álvaro Uribe—hasn't done enough to protect trade union activists or to punish past murders of labor leaders. Its a spurious complaint: Actually, in 2006, union members were slightly less likely than the average Colombian to be murdered. But the human rights issue has served as cover for many Democrats whose true objections are to free trade itself.

Once the agreement arrives on the Hill, Congress will have 90 legislative days to vote yes or no—no amendments and no filibusters